

5 October 2020

To the Hon Josh Frydenberg MP
Treasurer
Parliament of Australia
By Email: josh.frydenberg.mp@aph.gov.au

Australian women need a Gender Equal Budget and COVID19 Recovery

Tomorrow night, you will present the most important budget in recent Australian history. It is a budget that must lift Australia out of a recession and prepare it for a post-COVID19 world. With international travel and global trade restricted, you must create hundreds of thousands of jobs for Australians through a self-sufficient program of infrastructure building, manufacturing and service delivery on shore.

But if the Australian economy is to really recover from the pandemic and have any chance of growth over the next decade, it needs to ensure that its economic strategies are gender equal. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has found that countries that close the gender gap can expect a 35% increase in Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Best economic practice demands that the Australian Budget delivers a gender equal recovery.

Even without the pandemic, Australia has a large economic gender gap, with women receiving less pay, less superannuation and less employment than they would like. The poorly constructed childcare system is only one of the disincentives to women's work and entrepreneurialism. The bias towards investing in male dominated industries and large and small businesses also plays its part.

In less than 24 hours, you have a chance to build back better and put gender equality at the centre of Budget 20/21. As a father to two children, we would hope that you would want to use your time as Treasurer to ensure both Gemma and Blake benefit equally from Australia's economic future.

An Australian Budget which is not gender equal, is setting the country to fail. If there are insufficient innovations, incentives, job creation and investment in Australian women workers, entrepreneurs and businesses, you will hold back over 52% of the country's potential. You can't afford to do that.

Since March, 106 organisations have joined Gender Equity Victoria in calling for Australian Governments to deliver a gender equal recovery from COVID19. We will be watching for your response tomorrow night, joining other women's and gender equity organisations across the country in examining your announcements and strategies in detail.

The Australian Government is already on the backfoot because of Treasury's failure to produce a Women's Budget Statement which examines the gender impact of spending and investment decisions. Just another reason why we continue to drop in ranking on the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index.

We will be looking out for evidence of:

1. Gender-equal economic decision making
2. Investment decisions made on the basis of gender-disaggregated data – job losses show that women in Victoria are losing employment in far greater numbers than men. We want to see announcements which recognise the gendered impact of the COVID19 disaster and a gendered nuanced response.
3. A return to gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) so investments in recovery do not worsen or entrench gender inequality
4. Investment in women's health, including the creation a gender and disaster prevention workforce to get us through COVID19, bushfire and the likely future consequences of climate change with resilience and careful planning
5. Economic recovery and jobs growth based on an intergenerational commitment to health, wellbeing, climate justice and a just transition.
6. Support for women's diverse economic roles with recognition of both paid and unpaid labour as well as innovative approaches to sharing the load of household duties to reduce the drain on women's productivity.
7. Strengthened social protection for our most vulnerable Australians.
8. Increased funding for preventing and responding to gender-based violence in crises and emergencies
9. Extension of access to free early childhood education
10. Invest in affordable and accessible large-scale public and social housing as part of broad based economic recovery and stimulus investment.

Gender Equity Victoria will be marking the Government's performance in the next 48 hours. We hope that you will rise to the challenge needed of you tomorrow night.

Yours faithfully



Tanja Kovac
CEO
Gender Equity Victoria

Cc: Prime Minister Scott Morrison; Premier Daniel Andrews; Mr Tim Pallas, Treasurer.